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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 2749
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0350
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI PRIORITY 0135
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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000109

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/01/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#) [NL](#)
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/AFGHANISTAN: EXTENSION PLANS IN
HOLDING PATTERN

REF: A. THE HAGUE 0052
[1](#)B. 07 THE HAGUE 2061

Classified By: Ambassador Roland Arnall, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Dutch MOD working-level officials agree enhanced task force and Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) training is vital for new partners contributing toward the Dutch-led ISAF extension in Uruzgan, but argue obtaining financial and political support for such training will be difficult. According to J5 CAPT Rob Bauer (please protect), potential contributions from Hungary and Georgia also are complicating Dutch task force planning, effectively delaying further consideration of any partner training. He requested further task force/OMLT training options and details from the USG regarding the Joint Multinational Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany, to better frame the proposed training for MOD senior leadership. Bauer discussed these issues with Army Attache and polmiloff on January 31. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Bauer and MOD Senior Advisor for Afghanistan Wendy Kwaks had hoped to "compare notes" on the Dutch performance in Afghanistan, especially following SECDEF's comments in a January 16 LA Times article (ref A) and leading up to the NATO informal defense ministerial in Vilnius. ARMA and polmiloff were quick to note that SECDEF's comments were directed at NATO's lack of counterinsurgency experience, and not specifically directed at the Dutch.

[1](#)3. (C) In that vein, ARMA and polmiloff suggested the Dutch have a unique opportunity: with a six-month lead time, the Dutch can train with their new partners to ensure that the extension mission in Uruzgan becomes "the model" for NATO integrated deployments in Afghanistan. ARMA and polmiloff again raised enhanced task force and OMLT training at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Hohenfels, Germany, as proposed by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (A) for Coalition, Peacekeeping, and Multinational Cooperation Debra Cagan (ref B).

[1](#)4. (C) Bauer agreed that from a "big picture perspective," the Dutch believe investing in the Alliance is important, and want to take every step possible to ensure their extension mission in Uruzgan succeeds. It therefore makes sense, Bauer said, that the Dutch would look at enhanced training for their new partners, especially since NATO lacks real

counterinsurgency experience. Kwaks agreed that this subject will no doubt be on the minds of the defense ministers when they meet in Vilnius, especially following recent letters from SECDEF to his NATO counterparts informing them of the 3,200 troop marine deployment to Afghanistan this spring.

15. (C) Bauer explained, however, that the reduction in Dutch troops in Uruzgan was based on the need to decrease mission costs for political masters in The Hague, and not -- as some had argued -- to protect a supposedly overstretched Dutch military. Bauer said that the new contributions from France, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, and possibly Georgia, were supposed to ease some of the mission's financial burden, while at the same time enlisting the help of troops "already prepared" to deploy -- at least, that was the case made to the Dutch parliament, Bauer explained. He said MOD leadership "at the most senior levels" determined that requesting additional funding to train "supposedly already capable" Allied troops was untenable -- how would the GONL explain that the cost of the mission had gone up while Dutch troop contributions had decreased?

16. (C) Moreover, Bauer explained, the Dutch are having serious doubts regarding contributions from Hungary and Georgia. He said the Hungarians insist on providing an infantry OMLT for Task Force Uruzgan, while the Dutch would prefer to give that task to Australia -- they expect Australia to announce the infantry OMLT pledge at Vilnius -- and have Budapest contribute a combat services support (CSS) OMLT. Bauer said the Dutch did not think the Hungarians could effectively provide an infantry OMLT, and wished Budapest would take an approach more akin to the Slovaks, who intend to start out small with 50-60 troops focused on base protection and build up to 200 troops by 2010 to eventually

take on some "outside perimeter" operations.

17. (C) On Georgia, Bauer said he had just returned from a trip to Tbilisi with a "less positive" impression of the Georgian offer. According to Bauer, the Georgian MOD has less money now for the Uruzgan deployment than they had originally reported to the Dutch, while the Dutch have serious concerns regarding Georgian NCO leadership and training at the company level -- the "facade is starting to crumble on their offer," Bauer said. He understood that the USG had requested Georgian troops stay longer in Iraq, and that the Georgians also would be contributing toward the French PRT in Kabul -- this means less troops (from 200 to 150) and experience in Uruzgan, Bauer said.

18. (C) Given the Georgian request for equipment assistance -- as passed by the GONL to the USG -- the Dutch are in the midst of determining whether a Georgian contribution will be "more harm than good." That said, Bauer noted the Dutch were not yet ready to "cut Georgia loose" as a partner. He said the Dutch will visit Tbilisi again in late February, and make a decision on a Georgian contribution by early March.

19. (C) In the meantime, Bauer said the review of the Georgian offer is being used by senior MOD officials as an excuse to delay a decision on the U.S. proposal for enhanced task force and OMLT training. Bauer acknowledged that Dutch CHOD Gen. Berlijn had ordered the Dutch MOD working level to avoid discussing the training proposal; Kwaks confirmed similar instructions from MOD Director of General Policy Affairs Lo Casteleijn. In essence, a frustrated Bauer said he is "sitting on his hands" while the Dutch determine what to do with Georgia.

110. (C) Personally, Bauer opined that the Dutch would "have to do something" with regard to partner training. But an extremely tight budgetary situation has severely limited Dutch funding options for partner training. Moreover, Dutch politicians will have a difficult time understanding why funding such training is necessary when they were told these partners could immediately assist the Dutch in Uruzgan, especially while other NATO Allies refuse to pick up their share of the burden in the south. Bauer also noted it was

difficult to discuss training options when it was unclear how Hungary would be incorporated into the task force, let alone whether Georgian troops would be used at all. Bauer suggested further details -- a range of training options, timelines to commit to JMRC training, whether training would be "one-off" or rotational in nature -- would be very helpful to frame the proposal for senior Dutch MOD leadership.

¶11. (C) On a positive note, Bauer and other Dutch officials will visit Singapore in the near future to finalize Singapore's contributions toward the Role 2 field hospital in Uruzgan. He said Singapore originally had planned to provide a surgical team, but now will likely contribute 20-50 nurses and administrative support. He stressed that Singapore's likely contribution was not/not public knowledge.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) While the Dutch MOD working level supports enhanced training for those countries contributing toward the extension in Uruzgan, MOD senior levels are wavering on the training's importance, given expected domestic political opposition and limited financial resources. As such, the review of the Georgian contribution affords the Dutch MOD the convenient option of delaying a decision on the training proposal as it slowly works its way through the Dutch bureaucracy. Nevertheless, Dutch Defense Minister van Middelkoop stressed the importance of deploying sufficient, well-trained OMLTs in a letter to Parliament in advance of the NATO Vilnius informal defense ministerial. Contrary to his CHOD and chief policy advisor, van Middelkoop's statement seemingly provides an additional opening to engage the Dutch on the importance of enhanced training for their future partners.

Arnall